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Cultural implications in organizational communication

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CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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Introduction

Intercultural communication is studied mostly in an international setting. Research is particularly international when done in conjunction with business organization; however, researchers do not need to go beyond United States borders to discover cultural diversity. Although the United States has been dubbed a melting pot of various people. the people have not melted together. Each group of people retains much of its cultural heritage or new cultures have formed, thus cultural differences remain.

Unseen cultural factors are one basis for communication misunderstanding. Instead of being aware that other interpretations of actions or words are possible, there is a dangerous assumption that, because another party appears similar, interpretations are similar. Understanding is assumed and communication is taken for granted. The assumption of similarity leads to communication misunderstandings. It is this hidden and not so noticeable cultural factor that can have profound effects on communication. If there are visible signs of possible cultural differences, parties can proceed with caution and expect difficulties which can be attributed to a cultural factor. If, however, there is a lack of awareness of a cultural barrier, a party may

Ruhly, 1976; Samovar and Porter, 1976). These two elements are the basis for a definition of culture.

A cultural group exists if (1) there is a sharing of common values and attitudes among the group, (2) those values and attitudes are passed from generation to generation, and (3) a rule structure exists which defines and describes what should occur in the relationships in the group. The sharing of values and attitudes entails sharing common meanings and/or rules for language and behaviors and sharing common role expectations and role behaviors. The definition does not confine culture to national boundaries. A cultural group can exist in any geographic size from a city block to a region. By this definition, a cultural group is not necessarily based on physical features, language, or national boundary. The term goes beyond that to describe a group of people who share a common meaning for events in their environment.

This paper deals specifically with various terms: "subcultures," "domestic cultures," and "interracial, interethnic or contracultural" (Condon and Yousef, 1977, p. 49; Ruhly, 1976, pp. 4-5; Rick and Ogawa, 1976, p. 23,[1] respectively). These terms basically refer to a situation in which two or more cultures are interacting. The people of these cultures may have some shared beliefs, values, and meanings, but there are also some areas of differences. A term heard

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[1]Andrea L. Rick and Dennis M. Ogawa, "Intercultural and Interracial Communication: An Analytical Approach," *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter (2d ed. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1976).

today more appropriately describes the situation as co-cultures. Co-cultures and domestic cultures (the latter term is preferred in this paper) attempt to eliminate the impression that any one people is subservient to another people. This author prefers to use the term domestic cultures so as to emphasize the focus of cultural implications within our own domestic borders. Sarbaugh's (1979) Scale of Heterogenity illustrated in Figure 1 depicts the domestic cultural situation.

On the far left (Fig. 1) is a typical intercultural situation; there are few shared experiences, meanings, or values. On the far right is an intracultural situation; there are shared values, life experiences, and meanings. Somewhere between the two lies a domestic intercultural situation in which much of life's experiences, values, and meanings are shared or at least understood by one or both parties. There are also some areas wherein people of the groups do not have homogeneity. The condition which makes interactions intercultural follows:

> In the intercultural situation, the variance in response between two persons to a given situation is greater than the variance within either of the persons to the set of conditions over time. In the intracultural situation the variance within the person may be as great or greater than the variance between the two persons (Sarbaugh, 1979, p. 8).

This paper emphasizes a need to look at differences between the various domestic cultures. This differences approach seems to be in line with the direction urged by those in the intercultural communication field (Ansante, 1980;[2] Bennett, 1979;[3] Saral, 1979[4]). These

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[2]Molefi Kete Ansante, "Intercultural Communication: An Inquiry

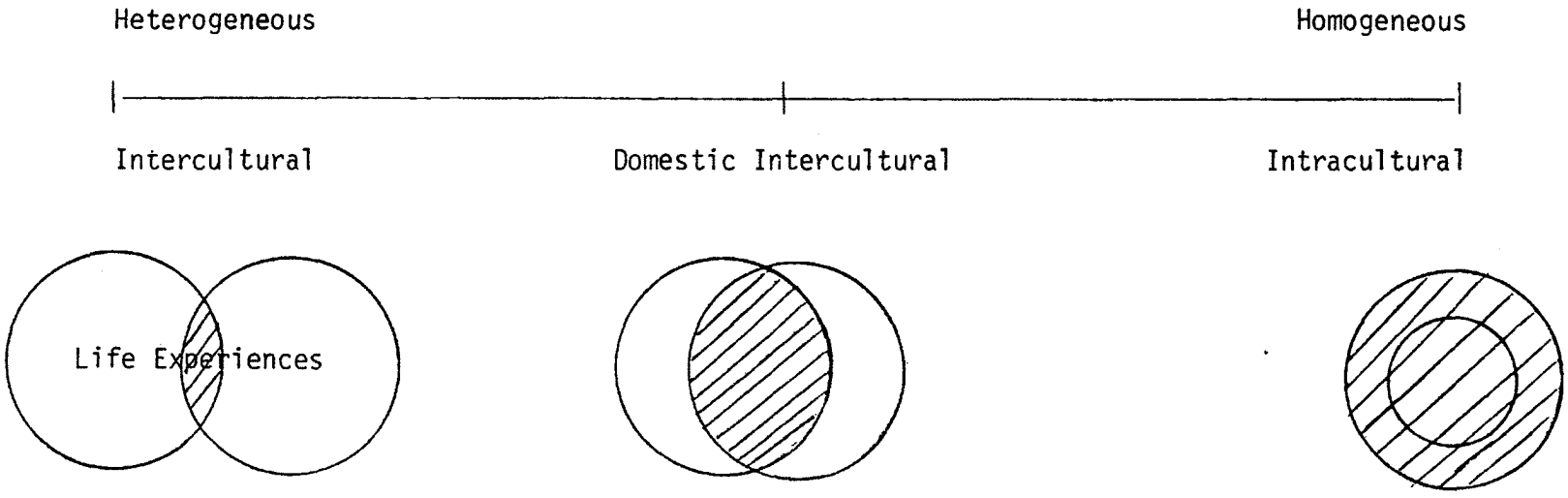

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Figure 1. Scale of intercultural and intracultural situations

Source:

L. E. Sarbaugh, *International Communication* (Rochelle Park, N.Y.: Hayden Book Company, Inc., 1979), p. 7.

scholars believe the differences in how various cultures view the world and communication leads to the problems associated with intercultural communication. The differences approach aids in emphasizing that no one cultural group has a patent on the right way of thinking or communicating; what must be understood are the differences and their effects on communication. Bennett (1979)[5] summarizes differences and their importance:

> We hear today a cry for "intercultural understanding." Again, this cry is meaningless if it is not accompanied by a shift away from that essential ingredient of ethnocentrism, the assumption of similarity. Unless we can accept that other groups of people are truly different--that is, they are operating successfully according to different values and principles of reality--then we cannot exhibit the sensitivity nor accord the respect to those differences that will make intercultural communication and understanding possible (p. 410).

These definitions enable the reader to (1) eliminate preconceived notions of what constitutes a culture; it opens the reader to consider groups of people that are more ordinarily overlooked as being a cultural group, (2) realize that there are many cultural groups within our borders and that each has a different way of viewing some part of this world, and (3) form an awareness that appearance of similarity

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into Research Direction," *Communication Yearbook 4,* Dan Nimmo, ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1980).

[3]Milton J. Bennett, "Overcoming the Golden Rule: Sympathy and Empathy," *Communication Yearbook 3,* Dan Nimmo, ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979).

[4]Julis B. Saral, "Intercultural Communication Theory and Research: An Overview of Challenges and Opportunities," *Communication Yearbook 3,* Dan Nimmo, ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979.

[5]Bennett, *loc. cit.*

makes it somewhat more difficult to spot hidden differences which affect communication.

An example may clarify these three points. There are two white Protestant males similar in economic heritage. One is from an old German-American family and the other is from an old English-American family. Neither one knows this or is aware of it. The German-American is under the supervision of the English-American. The German-American values close family relations more than work while the English-American values work more than family; that is, work comes before family. The English-American supervisor wants the German-American to work during the weekend. The subordinate resents the time away from his family and he resents the supervisor for ordering him to work. The subordinate conveys his displeasure by being aloof and nontalkative whenever the supervisor approaches. The supervisor senses this and views the German-American as lazy, sullen, and unwilling to work. The supervisor avoids contact with the subordinate. The communication breakdown is major, yet neither one is aware of the cultural factor of family versus work values. They think of themselves as being similar: white, Protestant, male, same general social background. They do not consider that they might be different in a cultural aspect. The hidden cultural factor of family-job values affects their communication.

Two studies further illustrate this differences approach although the studies were not specifically conducted with this in mind. The first study compared black and white supervisors on disciplining subordinates and conflict management (Shull and Anthony, 1978).

Experimental results showed no differences in conflict management, but cultural factors appeared in the discipline experiment. This experiment required the supervisors to decide on disciplinary action to be taken against truck drivers who, because they deliberately overloaded their trucks, were ticketed by the police. The results indicated that the black supervisors were more lenient in punishment. Shull and Anthony related this finding to the black cultural view toward civil authority; there was less concern over infractions with authority.

Similarly, Ivancevich and McMahon (1977) studied the differences in black and white work behaviors and performance. Previous sociological research indicated that blacks had a lower need for autonomy, self-esteem, achievement, and ability to control one's fate. In a goal setting experiment, Ivancevich and McMahon measured performance on three dependent variables: task-goal attribute (subject's perception of the goal setting process: challenge, feedback, participation, goal clarity, commitment, and personal goal commitment), task effort measures (efforts toward quantity and quality of performance), and performance measures (unexcused absences, service complaints, cost effectiveness, and safety). The results showed that blacks had significantly lower scores on clarity, feedback, and participation. The researchers concluded that the score differences were due to the cultural views of blacks related to goal setting. For example, the blacks' lower need for achievement was related to the lower score on the challenge measure. As in the previous experiment, a cultural value that was not usually considered had a significant effect on employee actions.

Hopefully, the reader now has a clear understanding of what is meant by culture and the specific area termed domestic culture. The following section briefly discusses what seems to be general knowledge as to how culture affects communication. This information will be used to later illustrate where culture can impact organizational communication.

Culture and Communication

When people enter a situation in which they know they will encounter people from another culture, they often seek information on how to act or behave properly. It can be as simple as asking whether one should greet the other with a hug or a handshake. It can also involve complex questions. In essence, people look for rules by which the other culture operates. Rules research is thus becoming more important to communication scholars. Domestic intercultural communication may provide an avenue for such research.

Some communication rules are explicitly stated but others are only implicit (Shimanoff, 1980). These rules could be divided into three areas when considering them from a cultural viewpoint (Ruhly, 1976): (1) the technical level where rules are taught, (2) the formal level where members of the culture are aware of a rule but do not know the why of the rule, and (3) the informal level where members make unconscious assumptions about right or good.

> Thus, when engaged in intercultural encounters we should constantly be aware that participants (1) may see different behaviors as rule violations, (2) may attach different amounts of importance to these violations, (3) may be unconsciously transferring their evaluation of the rule violation into an evaluation of the other

person, and (4) may not be able to explain the rules or rule violations that are making them uncomfortable (Ruhly, pp. 10-11).

Ruhly's caution is in line with the recognition that differences are important aspects in intercultural interactions. It is a differences approach. In terms of culture, this approach would investigate differences in rules, importance of behaviors, and evaluation of those behaviors. The behavioral differences appear in a number of variables related to communication. Samovar and Porter (1976) listed eight variables in "the communication process whose values are determined, at least in part, by culture . . . [and] these variables have the ability to influence our perceptions and to affect the meanings we assign to communicative acts" (p. 9). Barna (1980),[6] Condon and Yousef (1977), Ruhly (1976), and Sarbaugh (1979) listed communication variables in numbers from four to seven that are affected by culture. These, in turn, affect communication between persons of different cultures. When combining those lists, four variables are commonly considered important by these scholars: (1) values, beliefs, and attitudes, (2) roles and role behaviors, (3) language, and (4) thought patterns.

The basic intercultural differences in these variables lead to the perception of behaviors or communicative acts in terms of how one's own culture would accept a behavior or communication. This is termed ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism may be viewed as the reaction each member

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[6]Larry Barna, "Intercultural Communication Stumbling Blocks," *Messages: A Reader in Human Communication,* Sanford Weinberg, ed. (3d ed. New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1980.

of one culture has to a rule violation (or rule acceptance) by a member of another culture. From an ethnocentric outlook comes a "tendency to evaluate" (Barna, 1980, p. 295).[7] That is, a cultural group will approve or disapprove statements or actions of others based on its own cultural view rather than attempt to consider statements or actions from the others' viewpoints. Thus, stereotypes and prejudice emerge.

Everything we do tends to be organized around how we culturally perceive the world (Hall, 1976). We select, organize, and interpret information on the basis of our cultural perspective. Roles are expected of positions or people along with expectations as to how those roles could be carried out; however, various cultures may have varying expections of the same role. For example, a farmer's wife is expected to participate in all aspects of the farm operation including finances. On the other hand, a factory worker's wife is confined to narrow household functions with no say in finances.

Our cultural perception of how the communicative act is executed and interpreted affects the interpersonal communication transaction. Emphasis has to be placed on *transaction*. Communication is not a mere sender-receiver event. The parties involved in a transaction send and receive messages simultaneously; each participant affects the other while being affected (Wilmot, 1979).

The idea of communication as transactional is important to the study of intercultural communication, particularly in domestic intercultural communication where unseen differences can cause any number

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[7] *Ibid.*

of barriers to a transaction. Far too much of the intercultural communication literature focuses on the "linear, unidirectional model" of sender-receiver; it forgets that interpretations are being made, sent, remade, and resent simultaneously in the intercultural interaction (Ansante, 1980, p. 401).[8]

Not only does the transaction contain simultaneous messages which have to be interpreted for content, but relational messages are being sent also. (See Knapp, 1978 and Wilmot, 1979 for more on content-relational issues.) In other words, in an intercultural or interpersonal communication transaction, difficulties can arise over differences in message content as well as differences in the relational message. Content-relational-transactional communication is a critical concept in domestic intercultural situations.

The Shull and Anthony study (1978) cited earlier illustrates what Ansante urged intercultural communication scholars do in terms of seeking the transactional nature of the communication. It also illustrates the consideration of content-relational issues. In their experiment they discovered that black supervisors had a culturally based difference from white supervisors in the area of authority. It was a hidden difference which would be common to a domestic intercultural situation. Only through the experiment did they discover the difference. In this case, the black supervisors were more lenient in their punishment of the truck drivers who overloaded the trucks.

Let us suppose a black supervisor tells a white truck driver

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[8]Ansante, *loc. cit.*

that it is OK this time but not to let it happen again. That is the content of the message. Relationally, any number of things could occur in a positive or negative sense. Much could depend on the cultural value placed on authority. For instance, the white truck driver could accept the message but despise the black supervisor for being soft. The black supervisor could pick up the message that he is despised and not respected and assume that the lack of respect is due to his skin color. This transaction elevates (perhaps a better term is degenerates) the use of stereotypes and prejudices which may further convey a lot of nonverbal messages. The two will probably not develop a good relationship because communication is not enhanced.

In an organization, a supervisor would have to consider that his message not only reached the truck driver but other truck drivers, supervisors, and upper management. An organization has an intercultural communication transaction that not only has content-relational issues for the immediate parties but content-relational issues, positive or negative, that travel throughout the organization. This would occur were a white supervisor not lenient with a black truck driver, yet another set of actions and reactions could filter through the organization. In short, intercultural communication researchers cannot merely find differences between people of two cultures and postulate the effects of those differences on communication. The researchers must consider actions, reactions, and reactions to reactions that might derive from a communication event.

The above experiment also illustrates domestic intercultural communication problems that may develop from some immediate

communication events. These communication events result in positive or negative perceptions by either or both parties that are not necessarily arrived at because of "initial negative attitudes" or "prior resentments" (Ruhly, 1976, pp. 4-5). In the above example, the negative perception that the black supervisor was soft came during a communication event; it was not a result of prior resentment.

The problems known to be associated with intercultural communication are too easily overlooked in domestic interactions. As in international cross-cultural communication, the differences make the difference. In domestic intercultural communication situations the participants are caught in an assumption of similarity. The hidden or overlooked differences allow culture to enter the communication through the variables of values, roles, language, and thought patterns.

Culture and Its Importance to Organizations

Multinational organizations have been aware of cultural difficulties for some time. Why organizations have been and will continue to be interested in culture is well documented. For example, Fayerweather (1960, p. 117)[9] listed seven areas in which culture can cause trouble in organizations: (1) attitudes toward other people, (2) values, (3) social status attitudes, (4) attitudes toward individual work, (5) attitudes toward innovation, (6) attitudes toward analysis, and (7) attitudes toward discipline.

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[9]John Fayerweather, "Personal Relations," *Management of International Operations* (New York, N.Y.: McGraw Hill, 1960), cited by Theodore Weinshall, ed., *Culture and Management* (New York, N.Y.: Penquin Books, 1977).

Management objectives and expectations of results are influenced by the cultural background of those in management (Reynolds, 1978). That is, managers seek harmony with their own cultural value system even at work. Indeed, some management processes and problems, such as planning or motivation, are affected by "cultural constraints" (Reichman, 1977, p. 15).[10] There are two types of cultural constraints: sociological and educational. The sociological constraints are the values, attitudes, and beliefs which affect organizations through motivation and individual performance. Examples of sociological constraints are views toward (1) business and management, (2) authority, (3) achievement, and (4) the scientific method. For example, in a domestic intercultural situation, an organization may have one or more people who value autonomy highly while others do not place such a value on that concept. This would require understanding the cultural value and taking a different approach to management authority with those people. Educational constraints affect the skill and quality of an organization's potential labor pool. Examples of such constraints are attitudes toward education, literacy level, specialized vocations, and technical training.

The differences among people from different cultures in the two cultural constraints can affect an organization's management processes and effectiveness (Reichman, 1977).[11] Although Reichman's

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[10]Barry Reichman, "Significance of Cultural Variables," *Academy of Management Journal*, 8 (December, 1965), 292-308, cited by Theodore Weinshall, ed., *Culture and Management* (New York, N.Y.: Penquin Books, 1977).

[11]*Ibid.*

views are expressed in terms of a multinational corporation, it seems that cultural constraints might be operating in domestic organizations as well. Researchers need to explore the relationship between management problems and cultural constraints in our domestic organizations. Reichman offered no formula for the possible intrusion of cultural constraints on the management process termed "communication structures and techniques" (p. 23). Most of the management processes are accomplished through some form of communication. If the communication processes are affected by cultural constraints, the organization would be affected in other areas and processes.

General effects of culture in an organization are summarized as follows:

> Most of us act, think, and dream in terms of the norms and standards we have absorbed from our culture. . . . [Culture] tells us what is "right" and "good." . . . [Culture] influences what behavior is approved or disapproved, this in turn affects management (Weber, 1977, pp. 48-49).[12]

Weber felt that the point where managers "communicate, motivate, and make decisions [is] where cultural differences have their sharpest impact" (p. 40). According to Weber, cultural influences may affect patterns of respect, awe, contempt, what is thought desirable and worthy in life, leadership styles, interpersonal relations, and methods and directions of communication. For example, Whyte (1961) provided us with a type of research that could be done in the area of methods

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[12]Ross A. Weber, "Convergence or Divergence," *Culture and Management: Text and Readings in Comparative Management* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1970), cited by Theodore Weinshall, ed. *Culture and Management* (New York, N.Y.: Penquin Books, 1977).

and directions of communication. Studying the flow of communication in a Venezuelan company, Whyte found that the culture of the employees constrained the flow to a point where complaints, suggestions, or criticisms were not passed upward. Their culture placed a high value on status differences, submission to authority, and congeniality in public personal relations. In other words, subordinates did not question superiors' orders or methods of operation. They did not criticize or make suggestions. Upward communication was stifled.

Another example is found in the results of Phillip Tompkins' (1977) work on communication in the early NASA years. In this case, patterns of respect were culturally influenced. German-born scientists apparently respected each other's opinions more than they did the American-born scientists' opinions. Tompkins became aware of this problem through the American scientists' complaints that key decisions were being made by the "family," i.e., the German-born scientists.

Studying cultural effects on organizations seems to be an important area for organizations to consider. Findings from such research may aid in solving management problems in many areas. Communication is but one of those areas.

Organizational Communication: Its Importance and a Summary of Key Concepts

Organizational communication has been studied extensively. Its importance to organizations is well documented. Goldhaber (1979) stated that "communication is essential to an organization. . . . information is vital to effective communication. . . . persons who control information control power" (p. 3). More than ten percent of

the businesses in the United States fail because of poor management and ineffective employee communication (Goldhaber, 1979). Communication is the first and foremost function of management (Barnard, 1948).

On a more interpersonal level, Carroll and Tosi (1977) discussed the need for cooperation among organizational employees. They felt that "communication makes human cooperation possible because through it, instructions and intentions can be shared (p. 237). In organizations, however, communication is all too often not that which is expected. For example, Goldhaber's (1979) study of sixteen organizations revealed some major communication problems such as the grapevine being used more extensively than formal communication channels due to a lack of "openness, candor, and visibility of top management" (p. 46).

Further research has pointed out that communication in organizations can affect the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization. For example, superior-subordinate communication is known to affect employee performance, quality of product, absenteeism, and job turnover (Tubbs and Moss, 1977).

Two networks are usually used in organizations to describe what is occurring: formal communication networks and informal communication networks. Formal communication networks are those set up by an organization's power structure; that is, communication flows along the lines of authority--director to supervisor to foreman to employee or department head to department head. Communication in this network is composed mostly of task messages: directives, orders, and guidelines.

Most of the communication is downward, from top levels to bottom levels. The little upward communication that exists in the formal communication network is composed mostly of subordinates asking questions or providing feedback to the upper levels. Upward communication faces four problems: (1) distortion of information to please superiors, (2) the holding back of information, (3) superiors hear only what they are perceived to want to hear, and (4) employees tend to send messages that enhance themselves in the eyes of superiors. Horizontal communication describes messages to and from people at the same level in an organization. Coordination and integration of the various operations is the main function of horizontal communication. To be effective, it requires an exchange of information (Tubbs and Moss, 1977).

Informal communication networks are those established by the employees themselves outside of an organization's power structure. The communication can still be upward, downward, or horizontal in nature, it is via relationships rather than lines of authority. Informal networks are described as fast, accurate, and capable of carrying much information. The information travels in clusters--one person tells a group of others rather than one other person.

Formal and informal communication networks seem to be influenced by serial process of communication. This is the passing of information from person to person, level to level. According to Goldhaber (1979), the serial process leads to communication problems through details being omitted, added, highlighted, modified, or distorted. Communication plays a crucial role in any organization. If the networks of communication are affected by culture, the organization is affected.

Summary

Intercultural communication problems within organizations may not necessarily be confined to international companies. Domestic intercultural communication problems affect organizations through formal and informal communication networks. Organizations must look beyond easily identifiable cultural differences such as race or religion. There is a more complicated realm of culture that is defined only by beliefs, values, and attitudes. This is the realm of hidden, unaware differences. It is here that domestic intercultural communication problems develop.

The importance of focusing research on cultures within our organizations is summarized:

1. With differing cultural backgrounds, people in organizations have differing objectives and expectations which may affect an organization's operations on all levels.

2. Good interpersonal relations among employees is a prime necessity for the efficient functioning of an organization.

Chapter 2

CULTURAL ENTRANCE POINTS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Introduction

The influence of cultural differences on communication was explained in Chapter 1. A peoples' cultural view of their environment, their perception, has a leading role in influencing communication. Chapter 2 reviews literature which seems to indicate that culture can affect organizational communication domestically in manners similar to how culture affects international communication.

Two central themes appear after reviewing organizational communication literature: similarity in values and belonging to similar groups or cultures. Value similarity plays a key role in superior-subordinate relationships. This affects competency ratings, communication climate, and efficiency of organizational communication climate (Goldhaber, 1979; Scott and Mitchell, 1976; Singer, 1971[13]). Groups of employees evaluate other groups of employees, the organization, and group members on value similarity (Carroll and Tosi, 1977). The two themes seem to affect decision making through communication

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[13]J. Singer, "Managerial Perception of Subordinate Competence on a Function Personnel Value Orientations," *Journal of the Academy of Management*, 14 (1971), 415-424, cited by William G. Scott and Terence R. Mitchell, *Organization Theory: A Structural and Behavioral Analysis* (3d ed. Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1976).

networks, employee selection, job satisfaction, information availability, and the relationship between a superior and subordinate.

Emphasis has been placed on the differences between cultural groups as a key to intercultural communication research; however, it cannot be overlooked that intraculturally members are similar. Researchers agree that members of a culture have similar perceptions. The concept of intracultural similarity can be combined with intercultural differences for application to organizations and communication within organizations. Researchers must begin to seek groups of people that have similarity within and dissimilarity without. Culture underlies both; therefore, cultural factors should be recognized even in domestic organizations.

Perception (how it affects communication in organizations) and relationship development in organizations are two areas discussed in Chapter 2. The review brings together research in cultural and organizational communication.

Perception

Organizational communication researchers are concerned with perception and how dyadic relationships are developed in organizations. Perception, defined by Scott and Mitchell (1976) is the "process of selecting and organizing information to provide (for self)" (p. 83). It is not confined to selecting and organizing material only. Perception also selects and organizes and provides meaning for our own behaviors/actions and for the behaviors/actions of others (Wilmot, 1979). In a communication transaction, perception is influenced by

physical information, the parties' social-historical background (culture), and the situation in which they are at the moment.

Stereotyping, the halo effect, and projection are perceptual distortions that organizations must deal with based on errors which employees make because of their perceptions (Scott and Mitchell, 1976). These three perceptual distortions can affect organizational communication. There are other aspects of organizational communication that affect communication, of course, but these tie in with a cultural perspective.

Stereotyping may contribute to the transmission of messages that are not conducive to communication or that may prevent us from receiving messages properly. Stereotyping is a situation in which beliefs about individuals or groups of people are based on the idea that an individual or group possesses some characteristic that typifies a particular group of people. Upward, downward, and horizontal organizational communication can be affected by this error. For example, suppose a downward communication message is diluted to a point where no substantive information is presented. This dilution may be based on an upper management's stereotype that "those people just won't understand the complexity of the issue, so let's make it simple for them." If the subordinates, members of a common cultural group, feel they are being treated as simpletons, the organization has to deal with any number of transactional-relational possibilities. One is that the subordinate group (culture) might react negatively to the message content and demand more information while relationally repercussions could appear in employee morale, turnover, and reduced upward communication

Horizontal communication may be influenced by the halo effect. This process is "where one's impressions (favorable or unfavorable) of another person (or group of persons) in one area tend to influence his or her judgment about that person in other areas" (Scott and Mitchell, 1976, pp. 90-91). In horizontal communication, coordination of groups is critical so that crucial exchanges of information can be accomplished. If, however, one cultural group perceives another cultural group negatively, it may be entirely possible that the information provided by the negatively perceived group is also perceived as less important. The exchange of information is thus diminished. For example, a factory employs a group of Spanish-Americans in one department on a production line. These Spanish-Americans are looked down upon as inferior workers by white employees in other departments along the production line. In the process of production, the Spanish-Americans realize that a particular process can be improved by changing a procedure earlier in the line. When they try to pass this information to preceding departments in the production line, the information is not accepted or believed to be helpful. The suggestion and information is overlooked, support from the other departments is not given, and the suggestion is forgotten.

The halo effect is also evidenced by the Cover Your Ass Principle in which employees tend to make sure they do nothing that would be noticed negatively. In essence, upward communication may be stifled. For example, it may be possible that, if something done by a subordinate cultural group is seen as negative by that same group, it may withhold the information from upward communication. Upper levels of the

organization may or may not view the action as negative. The upper levels are not provided with the information needed to make a decision or correct errors. Such behaviors easily occur in cross-cultural situations. Each cultural group has its own view of what is right, proper, or good. If a group performs a task or behavior that is considered improper, it does not want it known even though the other cultural groups may not see it as an impropriety. In cross-cultural situations there is a need to maintain the group as a form of protection (Burk, 1976).[14] This feeling adds to the need to cover perceived errors.

Projection is the process of attributing to others the same feelings one is feeling yet being unaware that one is doing so. An example of projection, interculturally, is seen in the reaction of Americans to Japanese smiling in embarrassing situations. That is, Japanese will often show embarrassment by smiling. An American sees the smiling behavior and projects his/her view that the Japanese is friendly and happy with the situation when the Japanese is attempting to express embarrassment. Because the American is happy if he/she smiles, it is assumed that the Japanese is happy.

Projection involves selective perception. There is a tendency to see problems or view situations in terms of those areas that are of major interest and meaning in one's own culture. Organizational

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[14]Jerry S. Burk, "The Effects of Ethnocentrism Upon Intercultural Communication: Functional and Dysfunctional," *International and Intercultural Communication Annual 3*, Fred Casmir, ed. (Falls Church, Va.: Speech Communication Association, 1976).

communication research indicates projection and selective perception affects communication and decision making in an organization via the idea that "we hear what we want to hear and screen out what we don't want to hear" (Scott and Mitchell, 1976, pp. 92-93). This may account for upward communication problems in which superiors do not accept what is seen or heard from the lower levels; they see only what they feel.

Stereotyping, halo effect, and project are three commonly known perceptual problems in organizations. Since these problems are distortions of perception that derive from a cultural background, organizations should become more aware of their employees' cultural backgrounds and differences. The three errors might then be caught more quickly. For example, the halo effect of perception is one area that could fruitfully be researched. The cross-national studies in intercultural communication reveal behavioral differences in organizational processes among cultural groups that could trigger the halo effect.

In decision making, some cultures tend to be more risky while other cultural groups are more cautious. Carlson and Davis (1971) compared Ugandans, who are cautiously oriented, with Americans, who are more risk oriented. They found that the Ugandans maintained their value orientation whether acting individually or as a group. In a comparison of Taiwan-Chinese (cautious) and Americans (risky), it was discovered that (1) solitary and group decisions made by the Chinese were more cautious than those made by Americans, (2) group decisions made by the Chinese were more cautious than individual Chinese decisions, and (3) group decisions made by Americans will be more risky than individual American decisions (Hong, 1978).

In an organization wherein one culture may be making decisions that affect the rest of the organization, the degree or risk or caution taken by that group may determine the success or failure of the organization. In some instances it may be more advantageous to be cautious or vice versa, but the cultural orientation of the decision makers may enter the process without any control. Even more important are the perceptions that different cultural groups may form about each other based on the cautious-risk orientation in decision making. One group may stereotype another as being too passive. It uses that stereotype when dealing with information and relationships where that group is concerned. Such a stereotype may induce behaviors toward the cautious group which may not be productive in terms of relational development.

Conflict may be handled differently by various cultural groups. In a study by Miller (1978) it was found that midwesterners in the United States preferred a conflict style of transcendence (going to higher principles) and least preferred the denial strategy (attacking the elements underlying the conflict). South Americans most preferred denial and least preferred bolstering (adding more and more of one's own beliefs supporting one's position). Asians most preferred differentiation (dividing a conflict into parts) and bolstering and least preferred denial.

Varying employee motivation methods may be needed with different cultural groups because what motivates persons from one culture may not necessarily motivate another culture's members (Schlurdermann and Schlurdermann, 1977). Hines (1973) researched that possibility. He took Herzberg's theory of work motivation and placed it in the culture

of New Zealand. Herzberg's theory stated that job satisfaction is a function of work activities (motivator factors) and that job dissatisfaction is a function of extrinsic variables such as supervision, salary, and working conditions (hygiene factors). This theory was largely developed in the United States. In New Zealand, however, the value is on interpersonal relations (Hines). Hine's questionnaire, given to employees in New Zealand, revealed that satisfied employees rated both motivator factors and hygiene factors higher than did dissatisfied employees, but the motivator factors were not rated higher than the hygiene factors. This somewhat supported Hine's hypothesis that Herzberg's theory may not be applicable in all cultures. There is a need to take "cross-cultural differences into account when transplanting a motivational model internationally" (Hines, p. 376). We might take the hint and wonder just how applicable the motivation theory might be in our factories which employ large numbers of people of different cultures.

Kanungo, Corn, and Dauderia (1976) did a similar study on work motivation and job satisfaction. They compared two cultural groups, French Canadians and English Canadians, during the same test. Using a job opinion questionnaire with midlevel managers that tested their perceptions of and satisfaction with various job factors, they discovered differences between the two groups that were in line with the cultural values of each. For example, the French Canadians "attached greater importance to security, fringe benefits, and promotion to higher status jobs, less on fairness of pay and soundness of company policy. . . . Anglos attached more importance to achievement"

(Kanungo, et al., p. 114). Their findings agreed with Auclair and Read's (1966)[15] statement that from "a cultural standpoint French Canadian managers express much stronger needs for security and self-esteem at work than English Canadians" (p. 574). This suggests that cultural factors should influence the types of motivation used. It seems plausible that the motivational methods used in our organizations might not be useful for the intended receivers. Perhaps organizations are not considering motivation methods carefully enough in terms of the culture to which those methods are applied.

Domestic cultures may differ in these same areas, but researchers must go beyond the mere differences and investigate the perceptions the members of domestic cultures may have of one another because of their differences in such areas as conflict, decision making, or motivation. In a domestic intercultural setting, perceptions could easily develop as a result of behavior exhibited in such areas. As illustrated earlier, the content-relational messages delivered in an intercultural transaction may infringe on the relational (communication) development. On the more positive side, there is a possibility that the behaviors people from other cultures exhibit in conflict, motivation, or decision making may be viewed as a plus and enhance relational development. That is, the behaviors

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[15]G. A. Auclair and W. H. Read, "A Cross-cultural Study of Industrial Leadership," *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism Report 3* (Ottawa, Canada: Government of Canada, 1966), cited by Rabindra N. Kanungo, et al., "Motivational Orientation of Canadian Anglophone and Francophone Managers," *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, 8 (April, 1976), 107-121.

may result in people having positive rather than negative stereotypes: "Those Algerians really know how to negotiate" or "Farm kids sure are hard workers." Similarly, the halo effect becomes positive in that people attribute one positive aspect to mean that everything else will be positive, too. Cultural differences can be the very heart of such reactions, particularly unknown cultural differences. The result is that organizational communication problems discussed previously would be present.

An example of how culturally based behavior leads to perceptions that may or may not be desired is provided by Weinshall (1977). Decision making is a highly visible and ongoing process in organizations. It was discussed previously how persons from one culture may differ from persons in another culture in this process. Weinshall compared managers from Britain, Israel, France, and the United States in decision making. French cultural values lead French managers to consider numerous factors surrounding a problem in decision making; they then propose numerous solutions. Americans generally consider a few main factors and propose a few alternative solutions. This decision making behavior is based on cultural value. Then come the resulting perceptions based on that decision making behavior:

> Many Frenchmen regard the Americans as efficient economically, but they despise them for what they consider to be their superficiality. . . . Americans, on the other hand, regard the French as being highly cultured and educated, but despise them for their supposed inefficiency, disorder, and uncleanliness (Weinshall, p. 172).

Although the relational aspects were not investigated in this study, it is not difficult to see that such perceptions on both sides might not

be healthy for relationship development. Much, of course, depends on how such perceptions entered into their intercultural transactions.

Conflict may be a by-product of perceptions. According to Frost and Wilmot (1978), "perceptions are an integral part of a conflict situation" (p. 11). They contended that conflict may be productive or destructive. It may be constructive conflict in the sense that the conflict is desired so an optimum resolution can be achieved by the parties involved. It may be destructive in the sense nobody wins and there is no satisfactory outcome. Destructive conflict does not enhance organizational communication. For example, horizontal communication may be hindered by cultural groups who perceive themselves to be in conflict. Coordination and integration require some degree of compatibility and friendly relations. Rubin (1973) and Knapp (1978) specified that the sharing of information, a critical part of horizontal communication, is important for the development of interpersonal relationships. If groups are in conflict, information is not shared as freely, relations do not develop, and coordination and integration is hindered.

Organizational researchers recognize the importance of openness, trust, and candor for effective and efficient operation (Carroll and Tosi, 1977; Goldhaber, 1979). If an organization does not have those present in its employees and there is conflict, communication suffers:

> In general, the studies of the effect of conflict behavior on communication indicate that under conflict conditions, communication becomes defensive, polarized, and highly controlled. Channels of communication that are available are not used, stereotypes are invoked, and the participant views his communication as proper and his opponent's as improper or negative (Keltner, 1973, p. 235).

Conflict, then, can affect the formal and informal communication networks of an organization. If conflict is based on cultural perceptions, culture is the root of the organization's communication problem. According to Ruhly (1976), when one understands

> the effect of culture on communication, one can avoid unintentional conflict and violence, one is better able to understand intercultural conflict when it occurs, and one learns more about oneself by trying to perceive and comprehend alternative meanings (pp. 5-6).

An example of unintentional conflict and violence is provided by Thomas Kockman (1976).[16] In the fighting patterns of blacks and whites he found that whites usually hit first. It appeared that a black used words which, to a white, indicated a blow was about to be struck, therefore the white struck first. To the black, those words were not prestrike words; they weren't even close to physical violence. The violence resulted from unintentional distortions in the intercultural communication.

Besides having an effect on communication in an organization, cultural perceptions appear to affect how an organization's communication channels are viewed. This type of perception would also affect the communication of an organization. The Jain, Kanungo, and Goldhaber (1980) study revealed just such a cultural effect. They used French and English Canadians as subjects. Culturally, the Anglophones

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[16]Thomas Kockman, "Cognitive Orientations, Communication Styles and Cultural Meaning" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research, Montbello, Quebec, 1976), cited in Milton Bennett, "Overcoming the Golden Rule: Sympathy and Empathy," *Communication Yearbook 3*, Dan Nimmo, ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979).

seemed to be more autonomous and achievement oriented. They expressed lower satisfaction with organizations. The Francophones tended to be affiliative, security minded, and prone to following authority. Jain, et al. hypothesized that the two cultural groups would differ in their "perceptions of and satisfaction with the nature of the organizational communication system under which they operate" (p. 178). The experiment was composed of two groups of employees in a Canadian hospital: 224 Anglophones and 239 Francophones. Three areas of organizational communication were studied: (1) downward communication, (2) upward communication, and (3) the communication channels used for sending and receiving information. Satisfaction with organizational communication was also analyzed.

The subjects were asked to complete a Communication Audit Survey questionnaire, an International Communication Association instrument with reliability varying from .74 to .93. The results of the experiment revealed cultural effects in the three areas of organizational communication.

1. *Downward communication.* Francophones were significantly more satisfied with the information received. They tended to value the downward communication more than did the Anglophones. Jain, et al. (1980) related the Francophones' satisfaction with downward communication to the positive attitudes they exhibited toward management.

Attitude toward management is critical in organizational communication. Attitude toward management affects communication between supervisors and employees (Goldhaber, 1979; Scott and

Mitchell, 1976; Tubbs and Moss, 1977). Such communication affects job satisfaction, job turnover, production quality, and absenteeism. It might be worthwhile to extend the Jain, et al. (1980) study to cover the perceptions of the Francophone employees of their managers and, at the same time, obtain data on the managers' perceptions of the Francophone employees. The same data could be collected from the Anglophone side. Inclusion of a data bank containing Anglophone and Francophone perceptions of each other and their subsequent communication with each other might reveal a truer, more transactional view of the cultural impact on the organizational communication.

2. *Upward communication.* Francophones were significantly more satisfied with what was sent upward and how it was used by the organization than were the Anglophones. Francophones also perceived the upward communication channels as more important for communication with management than did the Anglophones. "Thus, sending information and suggestions to management and asking for clarification of job instructions were valued more by Francophones than Anglophones" (Jain, et al., 1980, pp. 182-183).

Organizational communication literature reflects the problems of upward communication such as distortion and omitting. The Jain, et al. (1980) results raised a number of questions: (1) do Anglophones tend to omit, distort, or add to communication sent upward in an organization? (2) are Francophones better at providing the information needed to make management decisions? and (3) do members of other cultures have these same attitudes and effects toward various organizational communication networks?

3. *Communication channels.* The use of films, motion pictures, television, and computer printouts to reach groups revealed no significant difference in how the two groups perceived the method used, but there was a difference on the importance attached to the channel. Anglophones did not consider these channels as important as did the Francophones. The use of face-to-face communication, the telephone, written memos, and letters as channels of communication were regarded more highly for individual communication than the channels used for groups. The two groups did not differ on the individual communication.

Jain, et al. (1980) suggested that the three findings indicate the "Francophones, being more affiliative, may find organizational communication more important than Anglophones" (p. 183). Information about organizational communication that is already known becomes relevant here. For instance, Goldhaber (1979) stated that the communication climate in an organizations is dependent on the employees' perceptions of the "quality of the relationship and communication within the organization" (p. 67). Goldhaber, citing Dennis, Richetto, and Wieman (1974),[17] said there is a significant correlation between communication satisfaction and climate and perceived organizational effectiveness. According to Carroll and Tosi (1977), "effective decision making requires information" (p. 262). Thus the way members of

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[17]H. S. Dennis, II, G. M. Richetto, and J. M. Wieman, "Articulating the Need for an Effective Internal Communication System: New Empirical Evidence for Communication Specialists" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1974), cited by Gerald M. Goldhaber, *Organization Communication* (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company Publishers, 1979).

cultures view the organization communication system may have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of the employees of an organization.

Summary

Cultural perceptions, from what has been reviewed herein, could affect organizational communication. Culture does so through three common distortions: stereotyping, halo effect, and project. Beyond the distortions, researchers must remember that communication is transactional and that behaviors with a cultural basis may set off a series of perceptions that lead to poor communication between or among members of different cultural groups. Perceptions can also lead to destructive conflict which has a negative effect on communication in an organization.

Cultural perceptions of an organization's communication system may affect the use of channels of communication, upward communication, and downward communication. The possibility of cultural implication in domestic organizational communication must be considered more seriously. Communication problems in organizations may not be simply interpersonal problems. Culture, its effect on its members and the relationships developed, may have a significant bearing on organizational communication.

The Development of Relationships in Organizations: The Second Cultural Entrance Point

Relationships in general and friendships in particular are more likely to develop among those persons who possess similar values

and perceptions (Knapp, 1978; Lazarfeld and Merton, 1954;[18] Rogers and Bhowmik, 1971; Rubin, 1973; Wilmot, 1979). In other words, friendships develop between persons who are culturally alike as well as alike in other ways.

Relationship development occurs among people in organizations as it does outside organizations. Relationships are critical to organizations and the power of relationships in organizations, based on similarity in culture, should not be taken lightly. For example, Zander (1977), citing Sills's (1957) study of volunteer organizations, recognized the power of friendships in organizations. The Sills study found that 90 percent of the volunteers were asked to join; 52 percent of these did so at the request of friends.

On the negative side there is danger in having a large group of employees with similar perceptions, values, or attitudes. Ingalls (1976) discussed one danger--groupthink. This occurs when members of a group tend to think in such a similar manner that few new thoughts are interjected. Groupthink can result in a "suppression of dissent" in decision making; it creates an "unwillingness to test assumptions" (Janis, 1972, p. 40). Groupthink is not necessarily a product of cultural similarity. It can occur in any group. An example of groupthink occurred in the 1950s when

> a clique of general managers and vice-presidents of General Electric, Allis-Chalmers, McGraw-Edison, and other electric companies

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[18]Paul F. Lazarfeld and R. K. Merton, "Friendship as a Social Process: A Substantive and Methodological Analysis," *Freedom and Control in Modern Society,* M. Berger, T. Abel, and C. Page, eds. (New York, N.Y.: Van Nostrand, 1954).

> met together informally at golf clubs and hotels to make illegal price-fixing arrangements, confident that their firms would support them in the unlikely event they were caught. . . . But they were caught, then convicted of conspiracy, fired, fined and imprisoned (Janis, p. 194).

Three conditions encourage groupthink: (1) high group cohesiveness, (2) insulation from outsiders, and (3) an active leader who promotes his/her own solution (Janis, 1972). Reasons given for groupthink, as a result of group cohesiveness, are conformity, preservation of intragroup friendliness, a sense of security to reduce anxiety and increase self-esteem, and acceptance of goals and assignments of tasks and goals (Cartwright, 1968; Janis, 1972). A group of people consisting of members of a specific culture already have two of the three conditions necessary for groupthink: high group cohesiveness and insulation from outsiders. This is particularly true in cases where cultural identification is highly visible. Only the third condition remains to be filled.

Although a great deal of research indicated that groups can solve problems quite effectively and produce optimum decisions (Bonner, 1959; Tubbs and Moss, 1977), the groups are not involved merely in problem solving. The groups are also involved in socializing and communication. In these processes, groupthink could be a serious drawback to relational development.

Group conformity or groupthink does not mean a negative result is always going to occur. The intragroup communication may actually aid individuals from the group who interact outside the group. The outsiders may benefit from the individual's perspective. For example, Newcomb (1943) found that, when Bennington College women maintained

communication with their family and friends, they were less influenced by the school's liberal tendencies. Those who maintained no communication with their families and friends tended to be more influenced by the liberal views. The good or bad judgment depended on the view considered. In this example, the child's parents might be pleased with continued communication, but other people in the college or society might like it better if the child became more liberal. In the final analysis, groups consist of individuals who can direct themselves and influence the group, too. Groupthink might not be a pervasive difficulty for organizations, but it must be considered when different cultures are involved.

Relationships are influenced by cultural value similarity. They are important to the organization in terms of groupthink and value reinforcement that may be constructive or destructive. They may play a significant role in the organization's communication. In organizational communication, researchers could investigate cultural influences on relationships at two levels: the dyadic level and the group level.

Dyadic Relationships in Organizations

The most common communication situation in an organization is the boss-subordinate communication (Goldhaber, 1979). Variables that affect the superior-subordinate transactions are (1) perceptions of each other, (2) past experiences, (3) nature of the relationship, (4) similarity in background, and (5) the amount of trust. All five variables are culturally influenced.

Halo effects appear in organizational relationships with cultural values as the basis for the effect. For example, Singer (1971)[19] found the closer the match between superior and subordinate values, the more highly rated was the superior. Goldhaber (1979), citing Daly, McCrosky, and Falcione (1976),[20] stated that attitude and value homophily are the most reliable predictors of superior-subordinate satisfaction. This situation clearly points out that the satisfaction with communication could be culturally based rather than a mere interpersonal communication event. Researchers could investigate further how value similarity or dissimilarity does or does not affect upward, downward, and horizontal communication. Conceivably, if there were value dissimilarity, the communication would be hindered. Carroll and Tosi (1977) alluded to the effect of culture when they stated that "communication is most free and open and easiest when the persons who are communicating have similar characteristics and attitudes" (p. 258).

A hypothetical example on the dyadic level may clarify what may occur because of cultural influences. Managers spend a majority of their time in communication. Small talk is an "expression of openness, . . . [the] desire to enter into conversation" (Condon and Yousef, 1977, p. 21). The function of small talk differs from culture

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[19]Singer, *loc. cit.*

[20]J. Daly, J. McCrosky, and R. Falcione, "Homophily-heterophily and the Prediction of Supervisor Satisfaction" (paper presented at a meeting of the International Communication Association, Portland, Oregon, 1976), cited by Gerald M. Goldhaber, *Organization Communication* (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company Publishers, 1979).

to culture and the rules are different. If either party views the rule of small talk differently, development of a relationship may be difficult. In employee-manager relations this communication event, which initiates a relationship, may be critical in view of the finding that the openness of managers is a major determinant of employee relations (Carroll and Tosi, 1977). It is a communication event influenced by culture. The differences in rules and a lack of awareness that there is a cultural difference may result in communication problems. A person from one culture may view small talk as inconsequential and not even socially desirable while a person from a different culture views small talk as important to a relationship development. How these two persons perceive each other during the small talk communication event can affect their present and future communication and relationship.

On the dyadic level, culture could affect organizational communication via the boss-subordinate relationship. Cultural influences could be destructive or productive in the communication transaction depending on the value similarity or dissimilarity of the participants. Organizational communication researchers seem to realize that one of the most important concerns of organizational communication is the transaction between managers and employees (Goldhaber, 1979). Culture may play a significant role at that level of communication. As illustrated in the example, the superior-subordinate may have different cultural rules as to correct behaviors, actions, or roles. There may be a multitude of cultural rules which should be recognized yet neither share. If not known, rule violations could occur without intent and the attribution of certain

characteristics to persons or groups that are not accurate could affect future communication.

Cultural Influences on Groups in Organizations

Organizational literature describes the importance of groups and relationships in organizational communication. That literature is summed by Goldhaber (1979):

> The network of relationships and roles found in the organization have implications in the structure of the organization via the communication patterns. It can either provide stability, predictability, and regulation or it can overload the system with too much information (p. 50).

It is also known that group members in organizations tend to be homogeneous in attitude and perception (Goldhaber, 1979; Scott and Mitchell, 1976). For example, the previously discussed superior-subordinate relationship is important in productivity and job satisfaction. Similarly, relationships among employees at the same or different levels in the organization are affected by how they communicate. Cultural values can help people form groups and relationships. For instance, informal communication networks in an organization depend a great deal on friendship networks. As stated in Chapter 1, information is passed along informal channels in clusters. Scott and Mitchell found "the greater the cohesiveness and attractiveness of the group members, the more communication" (p. 177). Assuming the clusters are groups of friends who have similar value systems, culture is a hidden element in the informal communication network. Recognition is particularly important when it is known that the informal network moves vast amounts of organizational information.

Assuming that friendship ties are culturally influenced, it is important to investigate the effect of friendship ties on an organizational communication network. The first thing to consider is that, because people from different cultures intermix so much in an organization, theyare apt to shed their cultural views in order to form a more encompassing thought pattern. It appears that such shedding and acceptance may not be so easily accomplished. A Reich and Purbhoo (1975) experiment involving six cultures (Canadian, French Canadian, Italian, Portugese, Chinese, and Ukranian) interacting together in a school setting (a social and work environment) did not result in more contact between the cultural groups. That is, the members of one cultural group did not develop relationships with members of the other cultural groups; acceptance of another cultural viewpoint was not included in the thought processes of the members of the various cultural groups. Reich and Purbhoo concluded that "more contact does not necessarily result in quality of understanding that leads to attitude change . . . [and] behaviors are still evaluated from one's own group" (p. 234).

Lincoln and Miller (1979) also did some research on friendship ties in organizations that are significant in terms of where culture might enter an organizational communication network. They studied the relationship between friendship ties and communication networks in organizations. Relationship ties in an organization were divided into two levels: (1) instrumental ties, those that arise from doing the work, and (2) primary ties, those that arise from informal social relations. Lincoln and Miller's review of the literature revealed

that in primary ties "relations occur between persons who resemble one another" (p. 184). One of their hypotheses was that "primary ties occur between organization participants possessing similar attributes" (p. 184). Ethnicity and socioeconomic origin were the two attributes used to distinguish organization participants from one another. Lincoln and Miller connected cultural similarity with communication channels through their review of work done by March and Simon (1958)[21] which suggested "differences and similarities in ascribed attributes of organization members influence their 'language compatibility' which in turn affects the formation of communication channels among them" (Lincoln and Miller, p. 185).

The Lincoln and Miller study surveyed employee friendship networks among five different types of organizations. They recorded the attributes of those surveyed on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background. Two of their findings seem relevant to this paper. The first, "networks of primary ties were highly segmented and short and with few ties elsewhere in the organization" (Lincoln and Miller, 1979, pp. 188-190). The segmentation and shortness combined with few ties elsewhere may have been an indication of a variety of cultural groups within the organizations studied. Race and sex are apparently more closely associated with friendship ties than work proximity--the second finding. In other words, workers form

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[21]James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organizations* (New York, N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1958), cited in J. R. Lincoln and J. Miller, "Work and Friendship Ties in Organizations: A Comparative Analysis of Relational Networks," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24 (June, 1979), 185.

friendship ties with cultural factors as a basis rather than developing friendships with those they work with at a specific job.

This type of friendship gathering could probably be seen in most large organizations during rest periods where work groups split to form other separate groups. Primary tie formation is quite visible on this author's campus. Blacks seem to group together in the cafeteria while Indians, whites, and various foreign students form their groups. Racial or sexual characteristics make primary tie grouping easily visible. This author feels, however, that such primary groups may be forming on far less visible cultural characteristics, but it is not so noticeable, so the magnitude is as yet unknown.

New research should investigate the possibility of hidden primary groups. Hidden groups consist of persons from a specific section of a city, from rural areas, or from a common ancestral heritage such as Polish, Scotch, or German. Such investigation might lead to research on the communication systems that primary groups form within an organization and the cultural basis such systems might display. These primary communication systems may be functional or dysfunctional for the organization. A comparison of the functional systems and dysfunctional systems might provide a new avenue of viewing organizational communication links.

A question remains: how might these primary ties affect organizational communication? Informal communication networks would rely heavily on liaisons. These are the persons who communicate from group to group. Liaisons are accorded high status and powerful positions (Goldhaber, 1979). Acquiring that status and power is

accomplished mainly through their ability to communicate between groups and their ability to process information from one group to another. Usually liaisons are not members of any one group. They transcend the group. Organizations, then, may have persons in significant communication positions that may or may not be processing information according to how each cultural group may have meant the information to be processed. An investigation of a liaison's abilities to communicate and understand cultural views would make a new area of research. Researchers might focus on the liaison's sensitivity to more than one cultural viewpoint or how the liaison transforms (interprets) information from one cultural meaning to another without losing the essence of the message.

Another consideration to make in relation to primary ties and their effect on organizational communication is to understand that such friendships are involved in many organizational processes. It is important to remember that primary ties are "not merely sets of linked friends, they are systems for making decisions, motivating resources, concealing and transmitting information" (Lincoln and Miller, 1979, p. 197).

The importance of these communication networks is outlined by Carroll and Tosi (1977) as a key factor in decision making, information gathering, and the emergence of leaders in the organization from those who occupy strategic communication points. Culture, then, is an underlying factor in the development of liaisons and communication power brokers in organizations.

Friendship ties may also affect formal channels of communication.

Withholding information is a common tendency of groups within organizations (Goldhaber, 1979; Keltner, 1973). Information may be withheld from upward, downward, or horizontal communication. If information in any direction is omitted, distorted, or enhanced, someone somewhere in an organization will receive inaccurate information. That information may be used to make decisions. Organizational effectiveness for planning, motivation, and improving employee morale and attitude is questionable under such circumstances. Lincoln and Miller (1979) concluded, "To the extent friendship networks influence the organizational processes, reason gives way to prejudice" (p. 197). In other words, an organization finds itself becoming entangled in human relations problems such as stereotyping, halo effect, groupthink, and filtering of information. All of these problems may have a debilitating effect on the organization as a whole.

Judging from the research reviewed, it appears there is some justification in concluding that (1) culture affects communication network ties in an organization, (2) these networks affect various functions of an organization, and (3) these networks affect human relations among employees of an organization by limiting communication across cultural groups.

Summary

Perceptions are known to have effects in an organization. What remains to be recognized are the cultural factors that influence the perceptions. Only then can the organizational leaders deal with the interpersonal problems that may be occurring. The basis would then be

more readily seen for such problems at the interpersonal or intercultural levels.

Culture seems to determine, to a large extent, friendship ties in organizations. These friendship ties are known to be critical in various areas of organizational communication and organizational processes. The cultural factors are often overlooked in formal and informal research. If cultural factors can be understood, a greater understanding of the organizational communication system should be achieved.

Chapter 3

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper focused on the idea that domestic cultures, intermixing in organizations, lead to organizational communication problems. People in domestic organizations do not realize that a cultural influence is present. Each culture may have different rules of behavior and different interpretations, yet persons from these cultures must interact in an organizational environment. The differences affect communication patterns within the organization. Culture influences the actions of persons in the organization and their interpretations which, in turn, influence interpersonal relations within the organization. Culture affects specific organizational processes such as decision making, management style, conflict style, and motivation.

In reviewing the literature, there are eight indicators of cultural influences on organizations which can be utilized in future research in domestic organizations.

1. When there is a gathering of groups of workers on breaks, this indicates that the workers view each other as similar. This is particularly true if, during observation, researchers find that the work group splits during breaks and different workers join a nonwork group.

2. The use of ethnophaulisms (disparaging remarks) among

workers directed toward some employees may provide a clue as to why there are recognized cultural differences and why these differences are recognized by the employees themselves.

3. Other areas outside the work domain might be observed for patterns of cultural association. These observations might include area of residence, what groups of employees meet after work for leisure activities, and community activities the groups of employees might be active in.

4. The analysis of communication networks, a common tool or organizational analysis, should include a demographic outline of some of the values possessed by those in the network. Friendship networks should be scrutinized for clues to possible hidden cultures.

5. Another frequently used organizational analysis technique has been to record the frequency and direction of communication. These recordings could be analyzed in terms that will attempt to reveal cultural influences on the type and number of communication events.

6. Analysis of individuals and groups as to their conservativeness or riskiness in decision making might reveal cultural influences.

7. If little contact is seen between groups of employes outside their job functions, one might suspect cultural influences.

8. Expressed general feelings of uncomfortableness by employees as to the manner in which other employees are behaving or doing a job may indicate cultural differences and rules and expectations.

Studies of these indicators will have to be more sensitive than those done in the cross-cultural international area because, on the domestic level, some values are almost certainly shared. Research on

cultural influences on organizations, in general, will need more precision. Three steps should be taken in research of this nature to increase that sensitivity.

1. Researchers should become aware of the sociological background of the cultural groups being investigated so that trends in values and attitudes can be used for comparisons of differences.

2. Researchers should set up an experiment in which the cultural influences could reasonably be expected to impact the results.

3. Researchers should measure not only the self-reports or experimental results, they should also measure the subjects' perceptions of one another as to their behavior or actions in the experiment; that is, they should consider the transactional-relational aspects.

To augment those steps, communication researchers (in conjunction with sociological researchers) may have to increase the study of attitudes and behaviors and rules of various domestic cultures, conduct further research on the concept of cultural lag (how long certain values maintain themselves over generations of a culture), and specify which variables are being included or excluded in the research design and how the excluded variables are being controlled (Grasmick and Grasmick, 1978; Negandhi, 1975).

Since many of the cultural influences may be hidden and no sociological data may be available, another approach would be to test the groups to be studied on their cultural values, compare them for areas of differences and similarities, then choose an experimental tool

that might reveal how the cultural differences affect results in organizational communication, management processes, or on the organization as a whole.

A qualitative methodological approach might even be more productive in such research. Through participant observation, interviews, observation in general, and surveys the cultural rules and values of a group of people could be discovered. Normally the rules and values of a culture might not be conducive to testing because these are unknowns and some may not appear on tests; but, through observation, patterns would appear. In a domestic intercultural situation it is these fine rules and values differences that are hidden. The qualitative approach would be a means to discover the differences. Gerry Phillipsen's research (1975, 1976) on the cultural patterns of a group of people within a large city is an example of the type of domestic cultural awareness that can be gained from a qualitative approach.

There is a wealth of data already collected by those in the sociological field concerning cultural values of the various people in this country. Communication researchers need to tap that data source, pick out differences, and compare persons in organizations who possess cultural differences to measure the cultural impact on employee communication, behaviors, perceptions, and organizational communication. This author feels that the results of this type of research might be fruitful in terms of aiding in solving some organizational communication problems and in awakening organizations to the possibility of cultural implications in organizational communication that before were overlooked.

Based on a review of the literature in this paper, and in the interest of encouraging further research, nine hypotheses are suggested. Hypotheses 1, 4, and 9 apply to formal channels of organization communication. Hypothesis 5 applies to informal communication networks. Hypotheses 2, 3, 6, and 8 apply to the formal and informal communication networks in organizations; these could be tested in both networks.

H_1 *If large groups of employees are of the same culture, upward, downward, and horizontal organizational communication will be affected by how that culture views communication in the organization.*

H_2 *If a group of employees has a stereotypic image of another group of employees, communication with that stereotyped group will be affected positively or negatively depending on whether the stereotype is positive or negative.*

H_3 *If a group of employees is perceived negatively, the group's communication will be seen as less important. If the group is perceived positively, the group's communication will be seen as more important.*

H_4 *If there are a variety of cultural groups within an organization, the friendship networks will be short and segmented and the communication, horizontally and downward, will be reduced.*

H_5 *The more cultural groups there are, the more difficult it will be for informal channels of communication to work.*

H_6 *If a group of employees is found to hold a common value system, one can expect the group's communication with different groups to have intercultural communication difficulties.*

H_7 *If employees of different cultural orientations are at the*

same level in an organization and they have negative perceptions of one another, horizontal communication will be reduced.

H_8 *If a cultural group within an organization perceives its action as an error, the group will withhold information about that action.*

H_9 *Value dissimilarity between a superior and a subordinate will decrease communication upward and downward.*

Researchers can expect some interaction between the formal and informal networks when culture is involved. In that light, Hypothesis 10 is suggested.

H_{10} *The greater the cultural diversity of the organizational members, the greater the reliance there will be, by those members, on the formal organizational communication network.*

Researchers should be cautioned that their own cultural bias will enter into the studies. The experiments that are set up may only apply to the culture of the experimentor. It is imperative that researchers understand that there is no one way of communication that is better than another. Researchers must not judge the rightness or wrongness of a cultural behavior merely because that judgment is from their cultural viewpoint. Another cultural group's viewpoint is as valid for them as the researcher's is for him/her. What needs to be accomplished is a recognition of the cultural impact on individual, group, and organizational communication relationships.

Research on domestic cultural influences in organizations is important not only in terms of communication. Such research is important for understanding the processes such as hiring, training, and promotion.

Culture can affect these processes or people in a cultural group can be affected by the processes. For example, an organization might find it worthwhile to take note of cultural impacts on the promotion process. Featherman and Hauser (1976)[22] provided an excellent indication of cultural impact on promotion. Their study revealed that persons from a farm background were hampered by that background in terms of occupation. "Farm origin has a small but significant negative direct effect on occupational status attainment even when education is controlled" (p. 383).

Grasmick and Grasmick (1978) followed up that study. They found that persons from a rural heritage had a reduced willingness to migrate. In organizations, however, transfers are common. In essence, the rural heritage and culture influenced the career development and promotion of these types of employees. Whether that is good or bad depends on how the promotion is viewed and by whom. Ethically, the organization and individual must decide whether or not it is beneficial to attempt to overcome cultural influence. With knowledge of the cultural impact, the organization and the individual might better come to understand what is occurring without labeling the promotion event as positive or negative or labeling the individual negatively.

Similarly, when training employees, awareness of cultural differences may benefit an organization and individual. Instead of

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[22]D. Featherman and Robert Hauser, "Sexual Inequalities and Socioeconomic Achievement in U.S., 1962-1973, *American Sociological Review,* 41 (June, 1976), 462-482, cited in Harold G. Grasmick and Mary K. Grasmick, "The Effects of Family Farm Background on the Value Orientations of Urban Residents: A Study of Cultural Lag," *Rural Sociology,* 43 (Fall, 1978), 367-385.

assuming that everyone is going to learn via the same method of training, organizations could consider alternative methods. By using such alternatives, the organization may employ people it might have otherwise lost or left behind. Individuals, too, may be employed when they otherwise would have had to discontinue employment with that organization.

Implications for motivation of employees have been discussed. What motivates persons from one culture may not motivate persons from another culture. Even more importantly, the real impact of cultural differences in these processes lies in the effect on interpersonal relationships among employees within the organizations. In that respect, organizations could be viewed as a microcosm of the larger community and society. What happens in the community can happen in the organization and vice versa. Culture plays an important role in theories concerning ethnic oppression in the business labor market (Bonacich, 1972; Noel, 1968; Turner and Singleton, 1978).

These theories suggest that specific cultural characteristics are used by workers to suppress other workers. One must consider the possibility of the same thing occurring within organizations. The resulting disruption within the organization would be no less important than a disruption in society. By researching cultural implications in organizational communication and implementing ways to handle such intercultural effects, society can benefit. Applying what is learned in the microcosm world of the organization to the larger community may be a fringe benefit of this type of research.

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